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KATHLEEN'S FATE,

—OR—

THE IRISH CHIEFTAIN'S DAUGHTER.



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THE IRISH CHIEFTAIN'S DAUGHTER.

—A LEGEND OF—

ST. KEVIN DE'CLARE,



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The following poem is a reproduction of Irish poetry which
all lovers of Irish eloquence ought to read.

Kathleen's Fate.

In Luglaw's deep wooded vale,
The Summer's eve was dying;
On lake and cliff, and rock and dale,
A lulling calm was lying.
There Virgin Saints and Holy men,
There Vesper Hymns were singing,
And silent down the rocky glen,
The Vesper Bells were ringing.

Soft gloom fell from the mountain's breast
Upon the lake declining,
And half in summer shade was dressed,
And half in silver shining.
And by that shore, young Kevin stands,
His heart with anguish laden,
And by him stands, with folded hands,
A fair and gentle maiden.

And "oh!" she sighed, "I've left for thee
My own beloved bowers,
The paths I've walked in infancy,
My father's ancient towers.
I've left for thee my native halls
Where late I've lived in splendor,
And home and friends and fame and all,
I've sighed not to surrender."

"Away!" he muttered, "lo! in youth,
A vow to heaven was spoken,
And I will keep my boyish truth
To age and death, unbroken.
How couldst thou bribe my soul to him
Against that high endeavor,
And cast those tempting eyes between
Me and that Heaven forever?"

The maid looked up in mute surprise,
Her cheeks with tear-drops streaming,
A guileless light was in her eyes,
Like childhood's sorrow gleaming.
"Oh! had I here a Heaven to give,
Thou wouldst be blessed this hour,
Then how could I thy hopes bereave
Of that eternal dower?"

"Ah no! Kathleen will ask no more,
For home and friends forsaken
Than here upon this peaceful shore
To see the morn awaken.
Beneath thy holy roof to dwell,
A lone and timid stranger,
And watch thee in thy lonely cell,
In sickness and in danger.

To rouse thee when the Couald Train
Their natal beads are telling,
To hear young Kevin's fervent strain
Amidst the anthems swelling;
To smile when ere thy smile I see,
To sigh if thou wert sighing,
To live while life was left to thee,
And to die when thou wert dying."

"My prayers," he said, "were little worth,
If thou wert kneeling near me,
My hymns were dull as songs of earth,
If thou wert by to hear me;
But you are young and guiltless still,
To sin and shame a stranger,
And what to thee seems pure from ill,
To me looks dark with danger.

There is a Heaven in yon blue sphere
Where joy abounds forever,
There may we fondly meet, but here,
In this cold exile, never.
There may we look with loving eyes
While happy souls are singing,
And angel smiles light all the skies,
And the bells of Heaven are ringing."

“But here, but here, O fair Kathleen,
Through all this wide creation,
In all that's bright there dwelleth sin,
In all that fair temptation.
It tracks the steps of young delight,
While souls are gay and tender,
It walketh in the dark midnight,
And in the noonday splendor.

It murmurs in the rising winds
That stir the morning flowers,
On friendship's lap it hath reclined,
And sighed in Love's own bowers;
It lights up all the summer skies
While dew the wild buds cherish;
But worst of all in women's eyes—
O! hide them ere I perish.”

The maiden calmy, sadly smiled,
She plucked an opening flower,
She gazed upon the mountain wild,
And on the evening bower.
“I've looked,” she said, “from east to west,
But sin hath never found me,
I cannot feel it in my breast,
Nor see it all around me.

The light that fills the summer skies,
The laugh that flows the free'st,
I've marked with loving ears and eyes,
Nor saw the ill thou see'st.
I always thought that morning air
Blew on my bosom purely,
The worst I find in all that's fair.
Is that it fades too surely.

If it be sin to love thy name,
And tire of loving never,
Why am I spared that inward shame
That follows sin forever?
For I can lift my hands and eyes
To that bright Heaven above me,
And gaze into those cloudless skies,
And say aloud, I love thee.

I had a brother in my home,
I loved, I loved him truly,
With him it was my wont to roam
As morn was breaking newly;
With him I cheered the weary time
With music, song, or story,
He never spoke of secret crime,
Of sin or tainted glory."

"But thou, but I," young Kevin said,
"Wilt love thee like that brother,
And wilt thou be content, sweet maid,
To find in me another?
Or seek ye but a brother's grace,
A brother's calm caresses?"
The maiden hid her burning face
Between her golden tresses.

"Farewell!" she sighed, "I plead in vain,
My dream of love is ended,
Thy thoughts of me, with thoughts of pain,
Shall never more be blended;
But now the even is falling late,
The way is long and lonely,
Ah! let me rest within thy gate
Till morning rises only."

Young Kevin paused, the winds blew chill,
The clouds rolled black and swelling,
Ah no, he could not deem it ill
To lodge her in his dwelling;
For churls like naples deeply sin
And lasting pain inherit,
But those who take the stranger in
Have patriarchal merit.

But oft he thought, mid holy strains,
Upon that lovely woman,
For O! the blood within his veins
Was warm and young and human.
He told his nightly beads in vain,
Sleep never came so slowly,
And all that night young Kevin's brain
Was filled with dreams unholy.

And when at dawning hour he rose
To chant his first devotion,
On tip-toe then to Kathleen's bower
He stole in stilled emotion.
Breathless above the maiden's form
He hung and saw her sleeping;
Her brow was damp, her cheek was warm,
And bore the stains of weeping.

Beside her crouched an aged hound,
Her Kevin's sole defendant,
One hand his sable neck around,
Like light in gloom resplendent.
The dog sprang up, that hand fell down
As Kevin's sight came deeper,
He crouched him at his master's frown,
And never woke the sleeper.

Then scenes of calm domestic bliss
In Kevin's soul came thronging,
Indearments soft and smiling peace,
And love, the young heart's longing.
"Why did I swear in youth to live
For sainted duties only,
And leave the joys this life can give
To lead a life so lonely?"

Ah! were I now a bridegroom gay,
Lord in my natal tower,
And were this morn my marriage day,
And this my wedding bower."
"Where were the wondrous ill?" he said,
To him, to earth, to Heaven,
The lovely dreamer turned her head
And murmured deep, "My Kevin."

He started, trembled, burned his limbs,
Struck with a sudden passion,
His eye in saddened moisture swims,
And stares in maniac passion.
A whilwind in his brooding soul
Arose and tossed it madly,
Then swiftly away the storm-clouds rode,
And left him drooping sadly.

Again that fond impassioned moan
Upon her warm lips lingers;
He stoops and turns between his
Those white and tapered fingers.
He bends, ah! hark! the Convent tale!
Another knell! another!
The peal to Requiem to the soul
Of a departing brother.

Up and away with freezing blood
He rushes from the bower,
And seeks the beachen solitude
Beside the Convent tower.
There hooded maids and cowled men
The dirge of death were singing,
And silent down the rocky glen,
The knell of death was ringing.

He raised to Heaven his hands and eyes,
Lone in the silent morning,
And said mid humble tears and sighs,
"I bless thee for the warning.
And dost thou thus by sounds of awe,
My slumbering soul awaken,
If I forget thy love and law,
O, let me be forsaken.

Hast thou a golden crown for those
Who leave earth's raptures hollow,
And firmly still through wilds and woes,
The light of virtue follow?
Oh! be this weak heart still thy care;
Be thou my soul's defender;
Grant that crown for me may wear
No soil upon its splendor.

If tears and prayers and Vigils lean,
A sin like mine can cover,
I'll weep while summer woods are green,
And watch till time be over.
But mighty armor must I wear
Against that tempting woman,
For O, she haunts me morn and eve,
And I am weak and human.

A counsel woke within his heart,
While yet the youth was kneeling,
Which whispered to his soul, "Depart,
And shun the war of feeling;
Courage in battle-fields is shown
By fighting firm and dying,
But in the strife of love alone,
The glory lies in flying."

Swift as the sudden winds that sing,
Across the storm roused ocean;
Swift as the silent prayers that spring
Up warm from young devotion;
Swift as the brook, the light, the air,
As death, time, thought or glory,
Young Kevin fled that valley fair,
That lake and mountain hoary.

And far away, and far away,
O'er heath and hill he speeds him,
While Virtue cheers the desert gray,
And light immortal leads him.
And far away, and far, and far
From his accustomed fountain,
Till quenched in light the morning star,
And day is on the mountain.

Back in Luglaw's deep wooded vale,
The summer warm was breaking;
On lake and cliff, and rock and dale,
Light life and joy was waking.
The skylark in the ear of morn,
His shrilly fife is sounding,
With speckled side and rocky horn,
The deer is up and bounding.

Young nature thus all bustling,
Stirs from her nightly slumber,
And puts her mystic curtains by,
Her mighty couch that cumber;
And dews long fresh on leaf and thorn,
And o'er each eastern highland,
Those golden clouds at eve and morn,
That grace our own dear Ireland.

Light laughed the vale, gay smiled the sun,
Earth's welcome glad returning,
Like value come when wars are done,
To beauty in her murmuring;
The night calm flies, the ruffling breeze
Sport on the gleaming water,
And gently stirs the tangled trees,
Above the Chieftain's daughter.

Like one in pain athwart her brow,
One hand her hair draws tightly,
Now falls that glance in tears, and now
It glimmers quickly and brightly,
For she has missed her votive love
Within his lonely bower,
Nor is he in the beechen grove
Nor in the Convent tower.

"I fear" she sighed and bowed her head,
"I fear he's told me truly,
That sin is in the sunshine bred,
When roses are breaking newly;
For dreary looks this bower to me,
Even while the roses wreath it,
And even that sunshine bright and free,
Hides something dark beneath it."

That dews paused, what foot has been
Upon its early brightness,
And left a track of deepening green
Upon its silver whiteness?
She tracked it by the raveled brake,
And by the silent fountain,
And o'er that lawn and past that lake,
And up the hoary mountain.

But there thirsty morning's sun
Had dewless left the heather,
The eye o'er all the desert dun,
No single trace can gather.
Still on she went, for in her breast
Deep passion fierce was burning,
Passion that brooks not pause nor rest,
And sickens at returning.

And far away, and far away
O'er heath and hill she speeds her,
While hope cheers up the desert gray,
And love untiring leads her.
And far away, and far, and far
From lake and Convent tower,
Till died in gloom day's golden car,
And night is on the bower.

Now toiling o'er each rugged scalp,
With wounded feet, and weary,
Now climbing up each mimic Alp
Of Wicklow's desert dreary.
Ah! lonely bray thy bassoned tide,
She passed at sunset mellow,
And Ondlers lake where far and wide
Thy haunted plains shone yellow.

Night fell, day rose, night fell again,
And the dim day-dawning found her
On Glendulough's deep wooded plain,
With lake and cliff around her.
There tired with travel long and vain,
She sunk beside the water,
For toil and woe and wasting pain
Hath worn the Chieftain's daughter.

Tall darkness o'er her high lagduff
Gathered his lordly forehead,
And shattered his breast in granite rough,
Rent crag and splinter horrid;
His helm of rock beat back the breeze
Without a leaf to wreath it,
The vassal waves roll in to kiss
His mailed foot beneath it.

Sudden, with joyous yelp and bound,
The dog came swiftly by her,
She knows, she knows that aged hound,
And he she loves is nigh her,
The nardine she follows swift,
The dangerous foot way keeping,
Till dark beneath the jagged cliff,
She saw young Kevin sleeping.

With hair tossed out and hands clenched tight,
The rugged granite hugging,
Like those who with the hag of night,
For voice and breath are tugging.
For oh, he had a horrid dream,
And every move has felt it,
And ruin was in the gloomy theme,
And Kathleen's hands had dealt it.

He dreamt that at the golden gate
Of Heaven flung wide and gleaming,
He heard soft music as he sat,
And saw bright pinions streaming.
Millions of sainted Seraphs he saw,
In light and fragrance ranging,
In calm delight and holy awe,
In speaking looks exchanging.

He tried to join that saintly band,
But in the porch before him,
With mocking eye and lifted hand,
Kathleen stood glooming o'er him.
She thrust him from that saintly crowd,
The gates came clanging after,
And on his ear came long and loud,
A peal of fearful laughter.

Again it ope's, again he tries
To join that glorious vision.
Again with lifted hands and eyes,
Deep fixed in keen derision,
That minion of the burning deep,
Stood wrapt in gloom before him.
Up sprang he from his broken sleep,
And sees her trembling o'er him.

"Vengeance!" he yelled, and backward tossed
His arms and muttered wildly,
The frightened maid her forehead crossed,
And dropped before him mildly.
"O, slay me not! O, Kevin spare
The life the Lord hath given!"
He paused and fixed his vacant stare
Upon the brightening Heaven.

"Kathleen," he said, "that timely word
Hath left my hand unbloody ;
But see the early morning bird
Sings in the sunshine ruddy.
Before that natal strain is o'er,
Fly far and hate and leave me,
For death is on this gloomy shore,
And madness haunting near me."

With clinched teeth and painful smile,
Love's last disparing token,
She flung her arms around him while
Her heart beat quick and broken.
She clasped him as she would have grown
Into his breast forever,
Then fixed her gaze upon his own,
And sternly whispered, "never."

Again, again, those maddening dreams
Upon his soul awaken ;
The fiend across his eyeballs swim ;
Those golden gates are shaken.
Again he hears the ringing mock,
The visioned stillness breaking,
He hurled the maiden from the rock
Into the black lake shrieking.

Down gazed he on the frenzied tide ;
Kathleen, how comes he lonely ;
Why has she left her Kevin's side,
That loved for Kevin only ;
What mean those circles on the lake,
When not a wind is breathing,
What bubbles on the surface break ;
What horrid foam is wreathing.

Ah ! never more, ah ! never more,
By lake or Convent tower,
Shall poor Kathleen come timid o'er,
To haunt his evening bower,
And never more shall that young eye
Beam on his prayer to break it,
And never shall that fond heart's sigh
Thrill to his own to break it.

The fiend that laughs at human woes,
Frowned at that mienac minute,
For well the baffled demon knows
The hand of Heaven was in it.
If tempted at that saintly height,
They had to earth sank lowly,
She ne'er had been an angel bright,
Nor he a victor holy.

Now they are in their bower of rest,
With light immortal round them,
Yet pensive heaves the pitying breast
To think how soon it found them.
The lark ne'er wakes the rugged morn,
Above that gloomy water,
Where sudden died and passion lorn
Kathleen the Chieftain's daughter.



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